

INCREASING BRAND REPUTATION THROUGH VIRAL MARKETING

V. SIVA SANKARAN¹ & N. KANNAN²

¹Research Scholar, R&D Centre, Bharathiyar University, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India

²Research Supervisor, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India

ABSTRACT

Viral marketing is the buzz word referring to marketing techniques that use pre-existing social networking services and other technologies to try to produce an increase in brand awareness or to achieve other marketing objectives. It can be delivered by word of mouth or can be enhanced by the network effects of the internet and mobile networks. This paper discusses the process and methods of viral marketing and focuses on the role of viral marketing in the success of brand building. This paper is conceptual in nature and the conclusion shows for successful viral marketing; consumers should perceive value in the transmission and consider it worthy of passing on to others without feeling. This aspect an important advantage for organizations to increase their sales and brand reputation or generate long time consumer's dialogue.

KEYWORDS: Consumers, Brand Reputation, Net Working, Viral Marketing. Word of Mouth

Received: Dec 11, 2015; **Accepted:** Dec 17, 2015; **Published:** Dec 19, 2015; **Paper Id.:** IJSMMRDFEB20161

INTRODUCTION

Viral marketing is any strategy that delights individuals and prompts them to enthusiastically pass on a marketing message to others, creating the potential for exponential growth in the message's exposure and influence. Like viruses, viral marketing strategies take advantage of rapid multiplication to explode the message to thousands, to millions (Kirby& Marsden, 2006). Viral marketing has also been referred to as "word-of-mouth or "buzz marketing. Viral marketing the technology creates a positive or negative buzz around a brand, product, or service. Marketing a brand through various channels on the Internet is some of the easiest and most cost-effective strategies any business owner can undertake. As inexpensive and easy as some of the methods of online marketing can be, business owners still need to move forward with a plan to get the best results. Part of any business/brand Reputation campaign must include video content, and the prospect of that video going viral. A consumer invites other consumers to visualize the viral message and also the products/services it illustrates, if consumers accept they will perform the same action of the initial consumer by spreading the message to other consumers. This aspect represents an important advantage for companies to increase their sales and brand awareness or generate long time consumer's dialogue. So it is very important for companies that want to spread their business among the target audience to plan a good on-line viral marketing campaign.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

According to **Patrizia Grifoni (2012)** ⁽¹⁾ a mix of methods (M-marketing, social networks, viral marketing etc) to create awareness for the company's brand, products and services. It provides a theoretical framework involving elements and factors important for the planning of an on-line viral marketing campaign.

Dr. Ralph. F. Wilson, (2005)^(II) stated that the effective viral marketing strategy consists of six elements. They are Gives away products and services, provide for effortless transfer to others, scales easily from small to very large, exploit common motivations and behaviors, utilizing existing communication and networks, takes advantage of other resources.

In the view of **Angela Dobeles (2005)^(III)** the successful viral marketing campaigns are comprised of an engaging message that involves imagination, fun and intrigue encourages ease of use and visibility, targets credible sources and leverages combinations of technology.

According to **Maria Woerndl, (2008)^(IV)** five type of viral marketing factors that may critically influence the success of viral marketing campaigns are identified. These factors are the overall structure of the campaign, the characteristics of the product or services, the content of the message, the characteristics of the diffusion and the peer-to-peer Information contents.

Lance Porter and Guy J. Golan, (2010)^(V) stated that More than traditional advertising, Viral advertising relies on provocative content to motivate unpaid peer-to-peer communication of persuasive messages from identified sponsors. While emotive content has always been the key to capturing audience's attention in advertising, viral advertising relies on increasingly raw content for actual distribution.

According to **Abed Abedniya and Sahar sabbaghi mahmouei, (2010)^(VI)** the role of social network websites which has influence on viral marketing, and the characteristics of the most influential users to spread, share viral content. Structural equation modeling is used to examine the patterns of inter-correlations among the constructions and to empirically test the hypotheses.

V. Antony Joe Raja (2012)^(VII) stated that how viral marketing spreads rapidly with a zero cost technique of social network and the significance of employing e-commerce strategy to it. The basic characteristics includes effortless transfer to others, scales easily from small to very large, exploits common motivations and behaviors, utilizes existing communication networks, takes advantage of others resources.

ELEMENTS OF VIRAL MARKETING

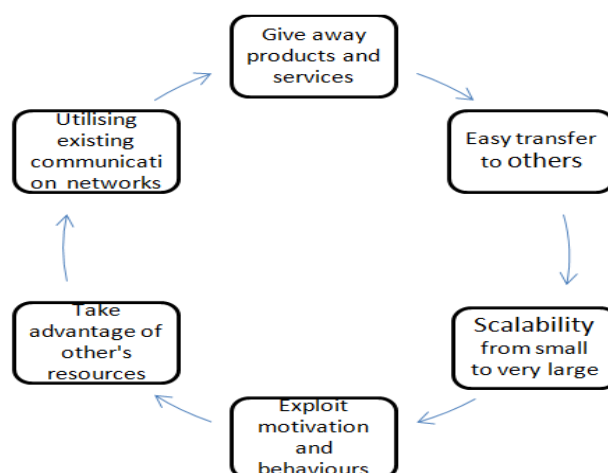


Figure 1: Elements of Viral Marketing
Source: Wilson (2012) "Elements of Viral Marketing"

The above figure illustrate that most viral marketing programs give away valuable products or services to attract attention. A viral marketing message must be easy to transfer and replicate via email, website, graphic, or software downloads. It spread like wildfire; the transmission method must be rapidly scalable from small to very large. Clever viral marketing plans take advantage of common human motivation. The most creative viral marketing plans use others resources to get the word out. Utilizing existing communication networks person's broader network may consist of scores, hundreds or thousands of people, depending upon his or her position in society.

BENEFITS AND RISKS OF VIRAL MARKETING

One important benefit of viral marketing is that viral marketing is relatively inexpensive in comparison to many other forms of advertising and marketing campaigns. The other major benefit of viral marketing is it reaches the audiences within a short period of time as messages spread exponentially at a fast speed. This rapid diffusion can significantly boost the speed of the adoption of the marketed product or service. Viral marketing makes use of peer-to-peer transmission. In addition, viral marketing can help achieve substantial audience reach as marketers get access to diverse audiences through social contacts and can profit from effective targeting.

Table 1: Potential Benefits of Viral Marketing

S. No.	Category	Benefit
1	Financial	Inexpensive
2	Diffusion Speed	Reaches audience within a short period of time
		Rapid, fast diffusion
		Boosts adoption speed
		Exponential
3	Peer-to-Peer Transmission	Voluntary transmission by sender
4	Audience Reach	More effective targeting
		Access to diverse audience through social contacts

Source: Internet-Induced Marketing Techniques

There are risks and challenges that marketers have to face when engaging in viral marketing campaigns. Probably the biggest risk is the lack of control associated with viral marketing campaigns: organisations have no means of controlling the spread of the message and the content of the transmission. The receivers of a message may even consider the transmission as 'spam'. With this lack of control comes the potential of a negative impact from a viral campaign. Negativity can occur through backlash and unfavorable word-of-mouth, and may result in a negative brand image, product or service boycott, unfavorable attributes associated with the organization and its products and services, hate sites etc. A lack of legal standards in terms of viral marketing is another potentially risky issue. The dependency on the consumer for message transmission is a further risk as consumers, for example, may want a return from the organization for passing on a viral message. The final risk to be considered when engaging in viral marketing campaigns is the lack of ethical standards consumers may feel exploited, cheated, and used and may view viral messages as an invasion of their privacy

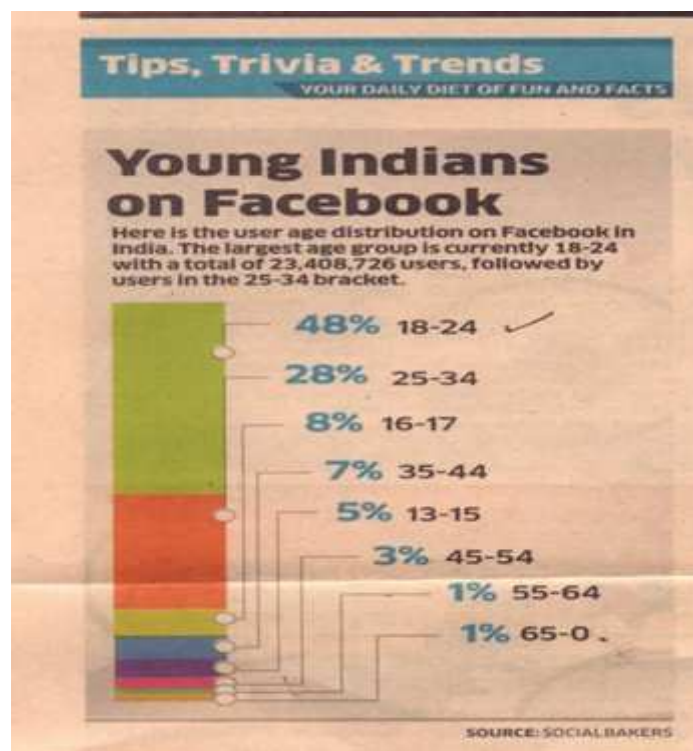
Table 2: Risks Associated with Viral Marketing

Category	Potential Risk
Lack of Control	Uncontrollable in nature, only few possibilities to measure success
	Total loss of control in particular content and timing & audience reach
	Lack of control mechanisms: No control over distortion processes. E.g. information passed by consumers might be filtered, incomplete, and biased. Adverse selection of customers
Potential Negative Impact	Risk of backlash and negative brand impact
	Negative word-of-mouth can happen

Source: Internet-Induced Marketing Techniques, 2008

Every existing advertising message or incident constitutes a Potential virus (viral advertisement) (in the Latin virus means toxin or poison). The virus develops three stages: infection (acceptance of the information), development (familiarization with the information) and spread (the information is passed to other users - seeding).

THE INTERNET ERA AND ITS POTENTIAL

**Figure 2: Young Indians on Facebook**

Source: Social Bakers, The Economic Times, 9th July 2012

Many companies use the Internet in their marketing activities. The above data reveals that the Young Indians on Facebook. The largest age group is currently 18-24 with a total of 23,408,726 users. Followed by users in the 25-34 brackets.

DISADVANTAGES OF VIRAL MARKETING

The virus spread is uncontrolled. The virus created by us can be modified (mutation), what can lead to

deformation of intentional message The virus existence in the Internet is of unlimited duration. False start - the lack of interest in virus resulting from its wrong distribution. There is a probability to create a negative brand image (Viral marketing is defined as a double-edged sword). It is impossible to measure the virus existence in the Internet. Internets take control over the brand image and play\With that image. The lack of legislative regulations concerning viral Marketing.

SOCIAL NETWORKS

Companies want to use social media to create more awareness around a brand or product. But one pitfall is thinking that just because promoting a campaign online, it will “go viral.” While YouTube has been around since 2005, it didn’t become a huge marketing tool until much more recently. Social networks evolved quickly over a short period of time. They began in the 1970s with bulletin board systems, but did not really start to take off until the early 2000s. They are valuable to marketers as a means of building relationships with customers, providing product information, and learning about consumer needs. As online social networking expands in popularity, marketers are using the venue to contact new target markets—especially the difficult-to-reach teen and young adult market. Online social networks are popular around the globe.

The Internet and the World Wide Web have become two key components in today's technology based organizations and business. As the internet becoming more and more popular it is starting to make a big impact on people's day to day life. As a result of this revolutionary transformation towards the modern technology, social networking on the World Wide Web has become lives. Social networks are websites which allow users to communicate, share knowledge about similar interests, discuss favorite topics, review and rate products/ services, etc. These websites have become a powerful source in shaping public opinion on virtually every aspect of commerce.

Following Figure shows the different types of social media

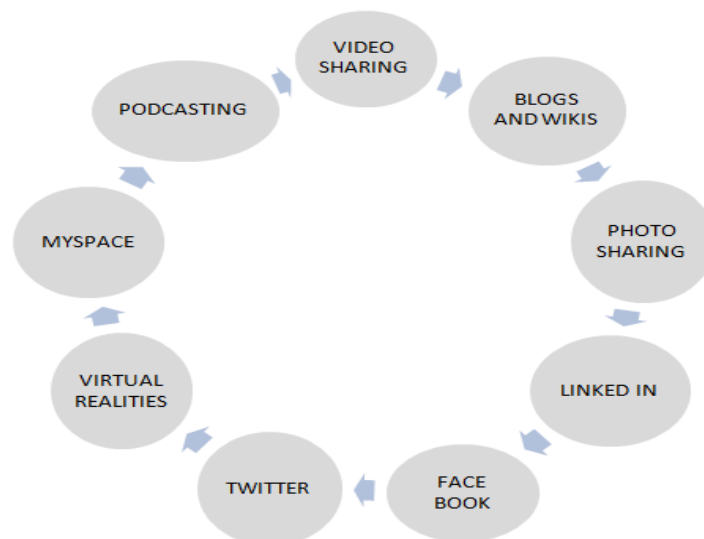


Figure: 3 Types of Social Media
Source: www.socialmedia.com

FACE BOOK

Became the largest social networking site in the world in 2008, with a third of all Internet users having visited the site. Appeals to a broad demographic, making it a great resource for marketers. The fastest growing

demographic on Face book is women over 55. Users can become a “fan” of products and companies they like. Encourages consumer interaction with companies. Good resource for small companies because it is an economical way to advertise

MYSpace

Predates Face book was once the largest social networking site until Face book surpassed it. It has a reputation for being more of a dating network than Face book. It is available in many different languages.

LINKEDIN

A social networking site for professionals is the fifth-largest social networking site. A profile resembles a résumé. Facilitates job searches and recruiting. Companies use the site to familiarize users with their business.

TWITTER

Is a hybrid social networking and micro-blogging site. Companies use Twitter to announce sales, promotions, and updates on products and services. It can help to (re)build customer relationships. It can give companies a competitive advantage.

BLOGS AND WIKIS

Blogs (web-logs) are web-based journals through which authors can editorialize and interact with other Internet users. Two-thirds of Internet users read blogs, and over half of bloggers say that they will blog about products they strongly like or dislike. Blogs give consumers power over companies because companies cannot control what bloggers write. Blogs represent a marketing opportunity, as they give firms an opportunity to address consumer concerns or to defend their corporate reputations.

Wikis are websites where users can add or edit content of posted articles. Wikipedia is the most famous wiki. Monitoring wikis can give corporations a better idea of how consumers feel about their company or products. As with other digital media, a negative representation in a wiki can damage the reputation of a company. Some organizations use wikis as an internal tool for complex projects.

PHOTO SHARING

Flicker is the most popular photo sharing website, but there are many. Photo sharing provides an opportunity for companies by enabling them to display snapshots of company events, staff, and products. Photo sharing sites allow users to upload, edit, and share photos. Helps to add a “personal touch” to businesses

VIDEO SHARING

Video sharing allows anyone who wishes to upload videos to the Internet to do so. YouTube is the most popular, but hundreds of other video sharing sites exist. Viral marketing is a marketing tool that utilizes the Internet, especially video sharing and social networking sites, to spread a message and create brand awareness. Campaigns that successfully go viral are transmitted rapidly around the Internet with no help from the marketer.

d) Marketers increasingly use consumer-generated content for ad campaigns, rather than for hiring ad executives.

PODCASTING

Podcasts are audio or video files that can be downloaded from the Internet via a subscription that delivers content to listening devices or personal computers. Podcasts are convenient because the user can listen to the podcast on his/her Mp3 player at his/her convenience. Podcasts are a good tool for reaching the 18-29 year old demographic. Television networks, as well as companies, are all creating podcasts in order to benefit from this trend.

VIRTUAL REALITIES

Second Life is the most popular of virtual worlds, but there are many. Virtual worlds are simulated environments that can involve thousands of participants and allow users to select an avatar and live out an alternative life online. Some, like Second Life, allow users to buy and sell goods, services, and even real estate in the virtual

BRAND AWARENESS THROUGH VIRAL MARKETING

It is the goal of any advertising campaign to increase brand awareness especially with the introduction of new brands. Target markets being exposed to a new brand is an important step for the product life cycle. It is actually the first step because only after brand awareness can you have aided brand recall, unaided brand recall, brand recognition, and then finally, after people become repeat users, brand loyalty. One interesting and fairly new way of increasing brand awareness is through viral marketing. Viral marketing has been around for a long time in the form of word-of-mouth marketing, but has transformed with the introduction of the internet. Now it can be defined as a technique to encourage a large amount of people to pass on a marketing message. Viral marketing comes in many forms including videos, emails, gossip, and can even be found in social media sites. In order to make any viral marketing campaign successful, it must contain relevant information that people think is interesting enough to pass on to friends or family. Advertising companies have accomplished this by adopting techniques such as incorporating humor, using current events, using unique content, and using content that can be helpful to people. Viral marketing campaigns that include this kind of information will not only encourage people to pass it along, but will help the consumer remember the marketing message.

Because of viral marketing, I am now aware of brands such as Jack Link's Beef Jerky, the International Music Festival (IMF), and Dove. Viral marketing not only makes people aware of our brand, it helps shape the brand's personality and it helps people form opinions about the brand. This is important because brand loyalty can only occur after someone forms an opinion. And, a brand having a unique or highly developed personality will help it to be the prominent choice for consumers. Viral marketing is a great tool for companies to use to get the word out about their brand and their line of products. This form of marketing helps to get people acquainted with the brand and helps people to recognize the brand in the future.

HONDA VIRAL MARKETING CAMPAIGN

Honda built in aspects of fun and wonder into the message, providing a point of interest for consumers to engage with the brand and talk about it with others. It ran the ad at the right time, gaining Maximum leverage with a broad base of consumers. It leveraged technology by spreading the message using multiple forms of media including television advertising and web-based messages. It encouraged voluntary word-of-mouth support, thereby increasing the effectiveness of the message and the number of people who heard about it. It was tied to a visible brand that provided a real world link

between the brand message and the tangible product. 200 billion SMS messages per month were exchanged between mobile phones around the world at the end of 2002. Cheaper than calling and simple to send these messages require no additional software and are particularly effective in targeting teens.

CONCLUSIONS

Viral marketing is to encourage people to spread and pass the message to others. Business organisations, social sectors, marketing managers, and stake holders should aware the viral marketing techniques in promoting the business. Successful viral marketing depends on consumers perceiving value in the transmission and deemed to be worthy of passing the message to others without feeling. In the growing social media space, advertising messages often are communicated through a social network in which consumers connect with others and share their personal information, and can deliver messages to their personal contacts using various applications and platforms. Nowadays Flipkart is using Viral marketing technique for selling huge volume of products and getting more profit. Pre-owned products are selling by various online marketers like OLX.Com. and Quikr.com. through using viral marketing. Entertainment sectors, Tourism sectors, Food and Beverages, Retail marketers, service sectors like Health care, Education sectors, Hotel, are vibrant in viral marketing for making profit. Since it is understand that viral marketing plays a vital role in service and manufacturing sectors.

REFERENCES

1. Patrizia Grifoni (2012), *An Integrated framework for on-line marketing campaign planning. International business research: Vol.6, No.1; 2013*
2. Dr. Ralph. F. Wilson, (2005), *The six simple principles of Viral Marketing. E-Commerce Consultant, Web Marketing Today.*
3. Angela Dobe. et.al (2005), *Controlled Infection Spreading the brand message through viral marketing. Kelly school of business, Indiana University.*
4. Maria Woerndl, et.al (2008) *Internet-induced marketing techniques: Critical factors in viral marketing campaigns. International Journal of Business Science and Applied Management. Vol 3, Issue1.*
5. Lance Porter and Guy J. Golan, (2010), *From subservient chickens to brawny men: A Comparison of viral advertising to Television advertising. Journal of Interactive Advertising, Vol 6 No 2(spring 2006), pp.26-33. ©2010 American Academy of Advertising.*
6. Abed Abedniya and Sahar sabbaghi mahmouei, (2010) *The Impact of social networking websites to facilitate the effectiveness of viral marketing. International Journal of Advanced Computer Science and Applications. Vol.1, No.6, December 2010.*
7. Antony Joe Raja (2012) *The study of E-Commerce service systems in global viral marketing Strategy. Available at SSRN: <http://ssrn.com/abstract=2190787>.*